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[home](#) > [research](#) > [responses to information requests](#)

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[New Search](#) | [About RIRs](#) | [Help](#)

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Bangladesh: Membership documents issued by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to its members

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

In 18 August 2010 correspondence with the Research Directorate, an official at the Canadian High Commission in Bangladesh provided the following information on the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP):

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party is one of the country's two largest political parties. As per the BNP's constitution, the party has a number of subsidiary/supporting organizations, including the Jatiyotabadi Muktijoddha Dal (Nationalist Freedom Fighters' Party), Jatiyotabadi Juba Dal (Nationalist Youth Party), Jatiyotabadi Mahila Dal (Nationalist Women's Party), Jatiyotabadi Samajik Sangritik Sanstha (Nationalist Social & Cultural Organization), Jatiyotabadi Krishak Dal (Nationalist Farmers' Party), Jatiyotabadi Shechchassebok Dal (Nationalist Volunteers' Party), Jatiyotabadi Tati Tal (Nationalist Weavers' Forum), Jatiyotabadi Ulema Dal (Nationalist Clerics' Party), Jatiyotabadi Matsajibi Dal (Nationalist Fishermen's Party), Jatiyotabadi Chatra Dal (Nationalist Student Party) and Jatiyotabadi Sramik Dal (Nationalist Labour Party).

The Official added the following about BNP membership:

Though a BNP member strictly means someone who belongs to the parent organization, it could alternatively also imply that he or she is a member of one of the subsidiary/supporting organizations that have their own unique membership policy/documents. (Canada 18 Aug. 2010)

The Official provided the following description of membership documents issued before and since 2008:

BNP, the parent organization, did not previously have a consistent or standardized membership document for primary members. This is because it is a large party with millions of members across the country. A typical membership document would be [on] a blank page (often letterhead with red and green flag/logo of the party) with the name, date of birth, father's/mother's name, address, etc. signed by the member and counter-signed by a mid-level or senior party leader, usually by the President of the BNP's chapter in the District or Upazila (Thana/Sub-District).

Since 2008, the BNP has undertaken a new membership drive with standardized documents for primary members. The standardized membership document contains three identical parts (one part for the member to retain as a receipt or proof of membership, one to be retained by the local district chapter of the BNP as a copy of the application, while the third part is to be sent back to the BNP Central Office as the main application for membership) with a unique identifiable number, the party's red and green flag in the header and background. The booklet is issued by the BNP Central Office and the three identical parts include the name of the member, father's/husband's name, age, occupation, educational qualification, address, phone, mobile number and signature of the member. The three identical parts, including the receipt or proof of membership held by the member, have pre-printed signatures of the party Chairperson

on the left and are counter-signed by the local BNP leader (usually the District or Upazila/Thana/Sub-District President). (ibid.)

The Official specified that the "membership document is in Bengali" (ibid.). A sample of the first part of the standardized membership document with descriptions of each of its sections is attached to this Response (BNP n.d.).

The Official provided the following details of how BNP membership documents are issued:

The BNP membership documents are issued by the BNP Central Office (headquarter) with the pre-printed signatures of the party Chairperson. The membership booklets containing three identical parts are distributed to the grassroots (district, sub-district and ward) chapters of the party and [have] unique identifiable numbers. The local chapters are then responsible to enrol new members. Though the membership documents are originally issued by the BNP Central Office and Chairperson, they are subsequently issued by the local grassroots chapters of the party to members during the membership drive and hence there is a signature of the local BNP leader (usually the District or Upazila/Thana/Sub-District President). As mentioned above, the membership document has three parts- the third part is the receipt or proof of membership. (Canada 18 Aug. 2010)

The Official provided the following details on how individuals receive BNP membership documents:

Prior to 2008, there was no standardized or consistent form to apply for BNP membership. The application form typically included the party logo, name, age, father's mother's name, address, educational qualification, occupation and a statement of allegiance to Bangladeshi nationalism, democracy, national unity and the party's constitution signed by the prospective member. Since 2008, the BNP has standardized membership documents. As mentioned above, booklets with membership documents bearing unique identifiable numbers are distributed to the grassroots chapters of the party.

A prospective primary member is required to meet a leader of the BNP local chapter (usually the Ward leader) and fill up the three parts of the standardized membership document with [a] unique identifiable number. He pays Taka 5 (approximately Canadian 8 cents) as the membership fee, which is collected by the leader on behalf of the local chapter. The signature of the applicant affirms his commitment to the party's constitution. The applicant's membership becomes effective when it is signed by the District BNP President. The membership document already has a pre-printed signature of the Chairperson. One part of the membership document is retained by the new member as a proof of receipt and membership, second part is retained by the local chapter, while the third part is sent to the BNP Central Office for their records. (ibid.)

The Official noted that the BNP Office Secretary had told him that if embassies or high commissions

enquire about a BNP member seeking [refuge] in a foreign country, [the BNP] have a procedure to verify the claims of the applicant. They [send] a formal enquiry to the local chapter of the party, who are required to send information on the circumstances affecting the applicant (e.g. legal cases, harassment) at the grassroots level. Based on the correspondence with the local chapter, the BNP Office Secretary in the Central Office informs the embassies [or] high commissions with a written letter on the authenticity of the applicant's claims and whether he is really a BNP member in the first place. (ibid.)

Corroborating information on membership documents issued by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party was not found among the sources by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response

is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). N.d. "Membership Booklet" Provided by an official at the High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh.

Canada. 18 August 2010. High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh. Correspondence with an official.

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Bangladesh Directory, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Bangladesh Nationalist Party Council 2009, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), *The Daily People's View* [Chittagong], *The Daily Star* [Dhaka], European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, Freedom House, Local Consultative Groups (LCG) in Bangladesh, Office of United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), South Asian Media Net, United Kingdom (UK) Border Agency, Refworld, United States (US) Department of State.

Attachment

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). N.d. "Membership Booklet." Provided by an official at the High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh.

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